

06-24-04

**REVISING THE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005  
AS IT APPLIES IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**HON. DAVID R. OBEY**

**OF WISCONSIN**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**June 24, 2004**

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is bringing to the House floor a debate on how best to make this country stronger and more just. The distinguished gentleman from Texas has just said that this is about raising taxes. One of the worst problems that can happen to you in Washington D.C. is when you begin to believe your own baloney. That is not what this resolution is about.

The situation is very simple: we have a war. That war by next year will have cost us \$250 billion. And the question is, how are we going to pay for it? We have two choices. One is to charge the bill mostly to our kids by raising the deficit, which is what is happening, and along with that making every American pay through the nose with less security for our homeland on our borders, in our ports, in our air ports, less security for veterans who are not receiving adequate health care, less educational opportunity for middle-class families because of budget squeezes, less health coverage for hundreds of thousands of children all over this country, less help for workers who are out of work; or will we choose the other way, as this resolution seeks to do.

Will we choose to ask the most well-off 200,000 people in this country, less than 1 percent of all taxpayers, will we ask them to make the supreme sacrifice? Those who make more than \$1 million a year, will you ask them to make the sacrifice of limiting their tax cut to \$24,000 on average rather than the \$120,000 average that they will otherwise get under the existing budget of this House? I think the answer is quite clear.

I plead fully guilty to wanting to see the most privileged and blessed people in this society accept a somewhat smaller tax cut in order to provide greater opportunity for others in society to get the basic requirements on education, health care, veterans' health care, and the rest.

Now, this resolution is very simple. It raises over \$18 billion by limiting the average size tax cut for persons who make more than \$1 million a year to about \$24,000 a year. That is what the average tax cuts will be for someone who makes between \$500,000 a year and \$1 million. We are asking those that make \$1 million to live by that same amount. That is hardly an outrageous sacrifice.

We then use 25 percent of that money for deficit reduction. We use the remaining \$14 billion to eliminate the real reductions in domestic appropriations that are contained in the President's budget. If this amendment is adopted, we will simply be adjusting education, health, veterans programs and all the rest by the amount that is equivalent to inflation plus population growth. That is all. We would get back to a standstill level on that score.

We put \$3 billion into homeland security. Why? Because the Hart-Rudman Commission told us we have a need of \$190 billion at the local level, and we have only met 15 percent of that need so far. We do it because only 13 percent of fire departments in this country are equipped to handle a full-blown hazardous material attack. We do it because only a tiny fraction of cargo in passenger planes is presently inspected for explosives. We do it because we have some 2,000 fewer people on the northern border protecting our border than the PATRIOT Act told us that we would have. We do it because only 20 of the most important 45 ports in America which ship goods into the United States have adequate inspection systems to make certain that there is not nuclear material or explosive material in ships that come to our shores.

We then put \$1.3 billion into veterans' health care so that we can cut the claims backlog of 327,000 veterans so that we can shorten the waiting time of veterans at VA hospitals, so that we can strengthen critical mental health services for returning veterans. We add \$1 billion to military housing because more than 120,000 of military families in this country serve in lousy housing, and they deserve better.

We put \$5.7 billion into education to close the gap between what this Congress promised it would provide local schools and what it is actually giving them. We put a billion and a half dollars into Title I so that 500,000 more poor kids and disadvantaged kids can get better instruction in reading and math.

We put \$1.2 billion into special education so that local school districts will receive more help from the Federal Government to meet Federal mandates to educate every disabled child. We put \$300 million in, in order to help 400,000 more children receive adequate child care and after school care.

We put \$2 billion in so that we can increase Pell grants to help those who otherwise could not afford to go to college. We want to increase the maximum grant by \$450. Pell grants today pay only for 35 percent of the cost of instruction at a 4-year university. Twenty years ago they paid for 75 percent. Can we not do better than that?

Then we use \$200 million to provide additional employment and training opportunities for

people who have lost their jobs. We also address a number of other matters. We fund a number of other programs that are high priority programs, as demonstrated by the letters from the minority side as well as the majority side of this House to our own committee, asking that our committee provide funding for these programs.

So that is what we do, and I would ask support for this resolution, and I repeat the same thing that I said when I began. We have one choice. We can either pay for this war by shoving the bill to our kids and by cutting back on educational opportunities, cutting back on veterans health care, cutting back on decent housing for the military, squeezing dangerously our homeland security expenditures, or we can ask the most well-off, the most prosperous people in this country to share a little bit more of the load by limiting the size of their tax cut to \$24,000 rather than the average \$120,000 tax cut they would ordinarily get.

I believe the majority of those people are patriotic enough to say, "Do it, we do not need that extra supersized tax cut as much as this country needs to have its fiber strengthened by providing the investments that I have just talked about." I would urge a "yes" vote for the resolution.

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Mr. Speaker, this amendment is pure and simple about shared sacrifice, as the gentleman from Illinois has just indicated. What we are asking is that those lucky people in this country who

make more than \$1 million a year, that includes the one-half of 1 percent of small businessmen who make profits of over \$1 million a year, we are asking them to accept a scaled-back tax cut so that they only get, on average, \$24,000 in tax cuts. That is 24 times as large as someone will get if they make \$50,000 a year.

And, instead, we are saying please, for the sake of the country, take a little bit smaller tax cut so that we have some room in the budget to strengthen protection on our borders, to strengthen protection in our ports, to strengthen protection at our airports, to provide stronger opportunities for education, to provide more civilized health care for our veterans, to provide better housing for our military personnel, to provide a little better shot at protecting the environment, to help local communities so that they do not have to lay off hundreds of thousands of kids from health care programs like SCHIP and Badger Care in my own State. This is an effort to see to it that we can enrich the many and enrich the few at the same time.

Trickle-down economics is what we have heard from our friends on the other side of the aisle today. They say if you just give enough to the people at the top, eventually some will trickle down to people at the bottom.

My old friend Harvey Dueholm in the legislature used to describe it this way. He said trickle-down economics is the theory that if you just feed the horses enough oats, eventually some of it will filter down to the sparrows. Think about it. And vote “yes.” It is the fair, it is the right, it is the just thing to do.